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ENG 1091G-096: Composition and Language: Honors

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SYLLABUS
English 1091G, Section 096, Fall 2008
Composition and Language, Honors
MWF 9:00 to 9:50pm, Coleman 3160, EIU

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(for questions only; do not e-mail assignments without my permission)

Objectives

In this course students will: 1) write expository and persuasive papers throughout the semester in which paragraphs, sentences, and words develop a central idea; 2) write purposeful, adequately developed paragraphs and sentences that are direct, economical, free of ambiguity, and structurally appropriate for the ideas expressed and for the audience to whom it is directed; 3) develop skills in critical reading and listening for understanding and evaluating culturally diverse course materials and for becoming more discerning readers; 4) develop research skills, including effective use of source materials and the principles of documentation; and 5) develop the ability to evaluate, criticize, and revise their own and their peers' writing.

Texts

A textbook was assigned to this class; however, I regret to inform you that this was a mistake (so if you got the book already—I believe it was something called *The World Is A Text*—return it to the textbook rental, as you won't be needing it). Instead, our reading material for this class will consist of a wide range of individual essays and articles, copies of which I will provide in class.

Grading Breakdown

Writing Assignments: Each grade includes assessment of any of the following that apply: preparatory/in-class writing, draft writing, final writing. It is important to understand that all of these writing assignments connect to each other in multiple ways (which we will discuss); as such, *you must complete and hand in every assignment to pass the class.*

WA-1: Abstract.....	10%
WA-2: Interview summary	10%
WA-3: Rhetorical analysis and comparison essay.....	10%
WA-4: Rhetorical analysis presentation and paper.....	10%
WA-5: Review with comparison and argumentation.....	10%
WA-6: Comparison and analysis of source coverage	10%
WA-7: Research synthesis paper	15%
WA-8: Class project: compilation of reviews.....	15%
Other Criteria: Quizzes and participation.....	10%

Writing Assignments

You will receive detailed written and oral instructions for each of the eight (yes, *eight*) writing assignments. While these instructions will present clear information on the goal, focus, and basic requirements of each assignment, they cannot possibly spell out every last detail on how to write your papers—after all, *you* have to figure out how to write your papers. Moreover, I won't repeat anything I've already said; for example, I'm not going to say every single time that you must double-space, because I'm going to assume that you've learned that already.

Conferences: For each writing assignment, you will produce draft materials that you will bring to and discuss in a 20-minute conference with me; you must also hand in the draft material with your final written product. Draft material will vary by assignment (and will be specified in the instructions). *Conferences are mandatory.* I shouldn't even have to say this, because most astute students will jump at the chance to get feedback on their papers from the very person who will be grading them, and yet every semester a few students see this as a lot of unnecessary extra work. Regardless, if you miss your conference, you not only miss out on this opportunity, but your grade for that particular assignment will go down one step (that is, from A to A-, A- to B+, etc.). I will provide more details on conferences once we approach our first writing assignment.

Deadlines: Assignments are due at the *beginning* of class on the due date. Our class meets at one of the earliest times offered, which wasn't my decision; I like sleeping in as much as the next person. However, the class *does* begin at 9:00am, so you need to be in the room at that time, including and especially on days when assignments are due. If your assignment is late by one class (that is, if you turn it in any time after 9:00am on the due date, all the way up to 9:00am the following class), your grade will go down one *full* grade (that is, from A to B, A- to B-, etc.). If you don't hand in your paper at the beginning of the class following the due date, I won't accept it and your grade for that paper will be F.

I accept *no excuses* for late papers, and I grant *no* excused extensions—not even for “good” excuses (illness/athletic event/doctor's appointment/job interview/wedding/funeral). I am especially not interested in technological glitches (printer not working/computer ate my file). You have the class schedule in your hands right now, so you know when the assignments are due. If you can't make a due date's class, for whatever reason, get a friend to hand in your paper for you or make other arrangements with me—though if you just come up to me and simply announce, “I'm going to be absent the day the next assignment is due!” expect to be answered with puzzled silence, because, well, how am I supposed to respond to that? It is not my responsibility to get your work from you; it is *your* responsibility to get it to me.

On that, however, unless you have made arrangements with me beforehand, please do not e-mail me papers or put them in my mailbox or slide them under my office door or leave them in the classroom if I'm not there, because there is no guarantee that I'll get them on time via any of these methods. I can't grade a paper that you honestly tried to get to me but somehow got lost; I can only grade what actually exists, *in my hands*, by the deadline. I don't say all of this to be mean, but because we are on a very tight schedule and it is crucial that you do not fall behind. If you do, you may never catch up again. Besides, handing a paper in is easy; writing a paper is hard, so don't ace the hard part only to screw up the easy part.

Other Criteria

Quizzes: That one got your attention, didn't it. Don't worry: this is *really easy*—if you do the reading. Each time you are assigned a reading, at the beginning of class I will give a very short quiz (usually only one or two questions) based on that reading. The questions will be extremely easy, such that anyone who has read the text *all the way through* should be able to answer them instantly—but anyone who hasn't read probably won't be able to guess. (There will also be discussion questions on the quizzes; you will freewrite briefly on these questions, but what you write here won't count as part of the quiz but rather toward your participation grade while also forming the basis for our classroom discussion of the text.) If you didn't do the reading, please don't insult my intelligence (and yours) by trying to fake answers. The point of all this, if you haven't figured it out already, is to ensure that you *do the reading*. It's not optional.

Participation: Participation means more than just saying whatever you want, relevant or otherwise. It is also more than a matter of raising your hand once a class and saying something, anything, just to ensure a decent participation grade. Students who come to class on time, listen to others, help and encourage others, ask or answer questions, contribute to discussions, focus on and engage in all classroom activities—these are students who are actively participating. It's a cliché, but one worth repeating at this point: the class is only as good as you make it.

Attendance

I will not take formal attendance, and there is no “attendance grade” per se. *However...!* If you got excited when you read that and figured you could sleep in most days, think again. In *every* class we will do something that counts toward your grade, and most of these activities cannot be made up if you miss them. I will not give make-ups for reading quizzes, for example, and unless you have a time machine, you can't possibly make up class discussions. Just because I don't take roll or pass around a sign-in sheet doesn't mean that your absences don't count. People who understand this tend to do well in college. People who don't...don't.

Sometimes students who miss a class are anxious to let me know that they really wanted to attend but couldn't because of circumstances beyond their control. I understand this, but the truth is that the reason you were absent doesn't really matter. This is not about hurting my feelings; it's about doing what needs to be done to achieve your goals for this class. As such, I'm not interested in notes from your doctor, parents, coach, or anyone else. If you come up to me and announce, “I was sick last class!” and shove a doctor's note at me, all I can say is, “Sorry; I hope you feel better,” which is not the same as saying, “Don't worry, it won't affect your grade,” because I have no idea how it might affect your grade—after all, you are one class behind everyone else. Related to this, if you are absent, do not simply ask me “what did I miss” and expect me to condense a 50-minute class into 20 words or fewer. It can't be done.

My point is not that you should slavishly drag yourself to class with a fever of 104. It is natural to expect that events may force you to miss class. My point is simply this: attend as many classes as you humanly can; if you miss class, for whatever reason, make sure you do what you need to do to keep up with the work, and expect there to be consequences that range from negligible (if absences are isolated incidents) to severe (if you make a habit of it).

Keep this in mind as well: attendance means substantially more than having a pulse, and the point of coming to class isn't just to "get credit" for being there. If you show up to class but then fall asleep, send text messages, work on assignments for other courses, etc., you might as well have stayed home, because you aren't really "attending." (Look it up in Webster's: the first definition for "attend" is "to pay attention," not "to be present.")

Plagiarism Warning

Plagiarism means word-for-word unacknowledged copying of another writer's work *or* unacknowledged paraphrasing of another writer's ideas. This can range from something as small as copying a sentence from a website without properly acknowledging the source, all the way up to turning in someone else's paper as your own. The minimum penalty is a grade of "F" on the assignment. In addition, you may fail the course, be placed on probation, or even be expelled.

Most students would never consider turning in someone else's paper as their own. But this is not the only way plagiarism occurs. Understand that plagiarism is based not just on intent but on deed. This means that it is not acceptable to say, for instance, "I didn't mean to plagiarize; it just so happens that what I wrote sounds very similar to this website. I went to the site to get some ideas for my paper, and what I read must have influenced me without me realizing it." Even if this sounds like something nearly everyone has done at one time or another, guess what: it's still considered plagiarism, because you paraphrased someone else's ideas without citing the source.

Luckily, this is easy to avoid. If you ever look at an outside source during the writing process, even if it's "just" a website, be aware of how influential that source may be. If you think the source may make its way into your paper, whether word-for-word or as a paraphrase, *cite the source* using proper MLA format (we'll go over this in class). That way, the worst you can be accused of is not following directions (if you weren't supposed to use outside sources) or using an inappropriate source (if you use, say, Wikipedia—more on this later), and you aren't likely to get an "F" for that alone, whereas you will definitely get an F if you don't cite the source.

Extra Credit

There is none; don't even bother asking. Every semester around Week 14, a few panicky students will realize that they're in danger of getting a less-than-ideal grade and will frantically ask, "What can I do to get my grade up?" My advice is that you start asking yourself that question *now*. The semester starts *today*, not Week 14. And what exactly can you do to get your grade up? I hate to tell you the obvious, but here it is: do the readings, come to class, pay attention, participate, put time and effort into your work, and turn everything in on time.

Final Word

This is probably not the most exciting thing you've ever had to read, but please: *keep this syllabus*; do not let it somehow fly out of your hands the second you leave the room. If you have questions about the class, refer to the syllabus or ask me. *You* are responsible for doing what needs to be done here; it is not an acceptable excuse to say, "I didn't understand what you meant, so I couldn't do the work." If you don't understand, find out. That's why you're here, after all.

Grading Criteria for Papers

Purpose:

“A” range: The essay has a clearly focused purpose and is sufficiently narrowed for a short essay.

“B” range: The essay has a fairly clear purpose and, but the writer doesn’t always consistently craft the essay toward that purpose.

“C” range: The essay has a purpose, but that purpose may be too broad.

“D” range: The essay has little clear sense of purpose; instead of focusing on a single topic, the essay jumps from one topic to another and makes no clear point.

Reasoning and Supporting Evidence:

“A” range: The writer provides specific, clear supporting details, offering enough evidence to make a point convincingly. The reasoning is valid, and there are no irrelevant details.

“B” range: Reasoning and evidence are fairly clear and appropriate but not always vivid and convincing.

“C” range: The writer’s evidence may be too general to fulfill the essay’s purpose effectively. The essay may offer a few specific details but not enough to be convincing. There may be a few irrelevant details or flaws in reasoning.

“D” range: Evidence or supporting details are few and possibly irrelevant, and there may be several flaws in reasoning.

Organization:

“A” range: The arrangement of ideas in the essay is appropriate for the writer’s subject and purpose. The introduction is engaging; the conclusion is satisfying. Transitions are effective, clear and varied. The reader can easily understand the direction of the essay.

“B” range: The essay is usually easy to follow, though introduction, conclusion, transitions and/or overall arrangement of ideas may be less than completely effective.

“C” range: Some thought has been given to the arrangement of ideas, but supporting points may not be in their best order. Introduction and/or conclusion are present but not well thought out. Lack of transitions may make the essay hard to follow.

“D” range: Organization is confusing. The reader may have great difficulty following the essay.

Writing Style:

“A” range: Writing is under the writer’s control. Wording is thoughtful, varied, and precise. The writer has obviously edited and proofread, and there are few if any grammatical, punctuation, spelling or typographical errors.

“B” range: Writing is competent, perhaps not varied and accurate enough for the “A” range, but effort is there.

“C” range: Wording is generally correct but “bland,” or perhaps the essay contains exaggerated language, wordy structures, or clichés. The essay also likely contains errors of grammar, punctuation, and/or spelling.

“D” range: Essay bears the clear markings of something the author dashed off without giving sufficient thought (typos, grammatical mistakes, redundancies).

F papers: An “F” assignment either doesn’t exist (meaning that the writer didn’t turn it in on time as specified), or did not meet any of the minimum requirements of the assignment, or was plagiarized (in part or in whole).

Note #1: An “A” grade is the top grade that can be achieved and does not simply reflect good effort; it reflects a combination of strong effort and superlative results. There are no “easy A” grades; moreover, grades you’ve gotten in other classes are irrelevant to your grades in this class. It doesn’t matter if you’ve “always gotten A grades” on your writing before; you’re being graded on your work for *this* class.

Note #2: All grades are final. I do not negotiate grades.

General Schedule (subject to change as necessary)

<i>Date</i>	<i>What we'll do in class</i>	<i>What you'll do for next class</i>
Mon., Aug. 25	Introductions; syllabus	Read Gladwell article
Wed., Aug. 27	Intro to abstracts	Write draft of Gladwell abstract
Fri., Aug. 29	Writing workshop.....	Write Kirsch abstract
Mon., Sept. 1	<i>Holiday; no class</i>	
Wed., Sept. 3	<i>Conferences; no class</i>	Finish abstracts
Fri., Sept 5	WA-1 due ; intro to interviews	Read Hersey; work on interview
Mon., Sept. 8	Discuss Hersey	Interview
Wed., Sept. 10	Writing workshop.....	Write summary of interview
Fri., Sept. 12	<i>Conferences; no class</i>	Finish summary of interview
Mon., Sept. 15	WA-2 due ; appeals & fallacies	Read Koch article
Wed., Sept. 17	Discuss Koch article.....	Read Quindlen article
Fri., Sept. 19	Discuss Quindlen article.....	Read James article
Mon., Sept. 22	Discuss James article.....	Read Moore article
Wed., Sept. 24	Discuss Moore article	Select and read article for paper
Fri., Sept. 26	Preview to evaluating sources	Work on rhetorical analysis
Mon., Sept. 29	<i>Conferences; no class</i>	Finish rhetorical analysis
Wed., Oct. 1.....	WA-3 due ; rhetorical analysis	Complete research
Fri., Oct. 3	Writing workshop.....	Work on presentation/paper
Mon., Oct. 6.....	Presentations.....	Work on presentation/paper
Wed., Oct 8.....	Presentations.....	Work on presentation/paper
Fri., Oct 10	<i>Mid-term break; no class</i>	
Mon., Oct. 13.....	WA-4 due ; review.....	Read Acocella article
Wed., Oct. 15.....	Discuss Acocella article; reviews	Read Bloom article
Fri., Oct. 17	Discuss Bloom article; reviews	Pick topic
Mon., Oct. 20.....	Research day.....	Work on review comparison
Wed., Oct. 22.....	Writing workshop.....	Work on review comparison
Fri., Oct. 24	<i>Conferences; no class</i>	Finish review comparison
Mon., Oct. 27.....	WA-5 due ; WA-6&7	Read handout
Wed., Oct. 29.....	Discuss source comparison.....	Research
Fri., Oct. 31	Research day.....	Work on source comparison
Mon., Nov. 3	Writing workshop.....	Work on source comparison
Wed., Nov. 5	<i>Conferences; no class</i>	Finish source comparison
Fri., Nov. 7	WA-6 due ; group activities.....	[Complete schedule to come]
Mon., Nov. 10		
to Wed., Dec. 10.....	Work on WA-7 and WA-8	
Fri., Dec. 12.....	WA-7 and WA-8 due	